DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 388 639 SP 036 285

AUTHOR Betancourt-Smith, Maria; And Others
TITLE Professional Attrition: An Examination of Minority and Nonminority Teachers At-Risk.
PUB DATE Nov 94
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Nashville, TN, November 9-11, 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS At Risk Persons; *Career Change; Career Choice; Elementary Secondary Education; Faculty Mobility; Job Satisfaction; Labor Turnover; Longitudinal Studies; *Minority Group Teachers; Profiles; *Teacher Background; Teacher Burnout; *Teacher Persistence; *Teaching (Occupation)
IDENTIFIERS *Teacher Satisfaction

ABSTRACT

There is significant evidence demonstrating the inability of the teaching profession to keep pace with other occupations in the retention of talent. While minority teachers have been found to be especially at risk, many teachers, both minority and nonminority, leave the profession within a few years of entering. The purpose of this study was to compare a profile of minority teachers with nonminority teachers in selected states, and to compare factors previously identified as correlated with attrition to the findings of this study. The 1993 responses (N=600) were compared with those of teachers participating in studies during the 1980s and early 1990s. Participants included early childhood/elementary, middle school, and secondary school teachers in nine states. Findings indicated: (1) single teachers tended to leave the profession entirely whereas married teachers usually moved into other roles in education, such as administration; (2) persons from white-collar families, whose families paid for the majority of college expenses, were more likely to leave than persons from blue-collar families where families did not pay for the majority of college expenses; (3) teachers from blue-collar backgrounds or teachers who had to work their way through college tended to be more satisfied with the profession; (4) secondary school teachers who did not perceive their principal as supportive of creativity, worked in an environment which is culturally different from their own, and did not share a pupil ideology with their colleagues were candidates for leaving. Data from the survey and 15 factors contributing to attrition are presented in three tables and the appendix. (Contains 12 references.) (ND)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 388 639

PROFESSIONAL ATTRITION: AN EXAMINATION OF MINORITY AND NONMINORITY TEACHERS AT-RISK

Annual Meeting
Mid-South Educational Research Association
Nashville, Tennessee

November 1994

Presenters:

Dr. Maria Betancourt-Smith
Dr. Duane Inman
Dr. Leslie Marlow

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

SB362PS

PROFESSIONAL ATTRITION:
AN EXAMINATION OF MINORITY AND NONMINORITY TEACHERS AT-RISK

There is significant evidence demonstrating the inability of the teaching profession to keep pace with other occupations in the retention of talent. Minority teachers have been found to be especially at risk to leave the profession. This group reports being less happy with the profession than nonminority teachers (Metropolitan Life Survey, 1988). It is a distressing fact that many teachers, both minority and nonminority, leave the classroom within a few years of entering (Natale, 1993; Bobbitt, 1991; Hafner & Owings, 1991; Schlechty & Vance, 1981).

Since the early 1980's professionals have continued to identify, monitor and redefine factors associated with career change among educators. Over the past several years, people within the teaching profession have examined the phenomenon of teacher attrition and have attempted to address measures which can retard attrition (Greabel & Olsen, 1986; Marlow & Hierlmeier, 1991; Hammer & Rohr, 1992; Karge, 1993). According to Grismer and Kirby (1991), accurate measures of teacher attrition and the prediction of attrition are most important if educators are to effectively plan for the coming years. Research suggests that as teachers leave the profession, those who choose to stay become more critical of the teaching environment. Frase & Sorenson (1992) have found evidence to suggest that teacher dissatisfaction is still increasing.

Figure 1 presents a research-based profile of the teacher who is most likely to leave the profession (Metropolitan Life Survey, 1988). Demographics, environment, background, and consideration of leaving have been identified as areas which are associated with a proclivity to leave. While gender, years of teaching, age, marital status, and socio-economic status may contribute to dissatisfaction and stress, factors related to the existing atmosphere of their current school environment receive the most recognition when teachers address reasons for leaving the profession.

Figure 1: Profile of the Likely Leaver

Sex (male)	Financial Support during College (parental)
Marital Status (single)	Work Ethic (white collar)
Current School Teaching Level (secondary)	Moonlighting (yes)
Years in Profession (<5)	First Year Experience (not good)
Intellectual Stimulation (less than business)	Support by Spouse/Best Friend (lack of)
Perception of Professional Prestige (poor)	Support of Principal (stifling)
Pupil Ideology (differs from colleagues)	School Composition (ethnicity is different from self)
School Composition (ethnicity is different from self)	Ever Considered Leaving Teaching (yes)

Based on the profile of the likely leaver, there is evidence that should cause concern to persons charged with providing schools with competent professionals. In 1990, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the US Bureau of the Census reported that there were approximately 45 million school age children. Haselkorn (1994) states that by 1998 this group of children should number 52 million. While this growing number of school age children is becoming more diverse in its cultural composition, most members of the teaching ranks are similar to those of the mid-century, white and female. NCES reported that in 1987, 71% of all teachers were female. Eighty-seven percent of female teachers and 90% of male teachers were white, non-Hispanic. Thirteen percent of teachers and 29% of students were minorities. Haselkorn (1994) reported that minority teachers still comprised 13% of the teaching profession while the school age children of African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American descent had increased to 31% of the population. Forty-seven percent of schools were reported to have no minority teachers.

The purpose of this study was: (1) to compare a profile of minority teachers with nonminority teachers in selected states; and (2) to compare factors previously identified as correlated with attrition to the findings of this study. In 1993, schools were randomly selected from Georgia, Colorado, North Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. The responses of teachers in those schools were compared with those of teachers participating in studies during the 1980's and early 1990's.

Sample and Methodology

The sample consisted of 18.1% early childhood/elementary, 21.2% middle school, and 58.8% secondary school teachers. Respondents were 1% Asian, 1% Hispanic, 1% Native American, 12% African American, and 85% European American. Twenty-eight percent of the sample was male and 72% female.

Letters of inquiry were sent to the principals of 100 randomly selected schools in nine states during the fall of 1993. Principals who agreed to participate were asked to designate a contact person who would receive, distribute and collect survey instruments. Thirty-one principals replied affirmatively and their schools were mailed a total of 1,200 surveys during the spring of 1994. Teachers responded to a 31 question survey instrument which focused on demographics, professional environment, teacher background and consideration of leaving. Fifty percent usable surveys were returned. The appendix presents the profile of all respondents in the study.

Findings

A review of the findings of this survey led to the identification of differences in responses that could be of significance. A difference of greater than 10% was noted between minority and nonminority responses listed in Tables 1-3. Percentages presented in the tables are for within-group responses.

Table 1 provides information on demographics and background of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographics and Background

Indicator	Minority	Nonminority
Marital Status		
Single	38.3	26.0
Married	61.7	74.0
Financial Support		
Self	19.8	25.1
Parents	17.3	46.1
Scholarships/grants	43.2	18.9
Loans	18.5	9.8
Work Ethic		
White collar	11.1	43.7
Blue collar	69.4	44.2
Combination	19.4	12.1

Studies of teachers who have left the classroom reveal that single teachers tend to leave the profession entirely whereas married teachers move into other roles in education, such as administration. Research also shows that persons from white-collar families, whose family paid for the majority of college expenses, are more likely to leave than persons from blue-collar families whose families did not pay for the majority of college expenses. National research indicates that teachers who come from blue-collar backgrounds or teachers who had to work their way through college tend to be more satisfied with the profession.

Table 2 provides information regarding the professional teaching environment. This includes current teaching level and school cultural composition, as well as teacher perceptions of: professional prestige, intellectual stimulation, and pupil ideology of colleagues.

Table 2: Professional Environment

Indicator	Minority	Nonminority
Teaching Level		
Early Childhood/Elem.	22.8	17.7
Middle School (5-8)	25.3	20.9
Secondary (9-12)	51.9	61.5
Principal Support		
Creativity	47.5	34.6
Conformity	11.3	8.5
Neutral	3.8	9.7
Combination	22.5	41.9
Don't Know	15.0	5.2
School Ethnicity		
Same	60.5	73.5
Different	28.4	7.0
Mixed	11.1	19.5
Professional Prestige		
Better	11.1	4.3
Worse	56.8	53.4
Expected	32.1	42.3
Intellectual Stimulation		
More than Business	13.9	4.7
Equal to Business	17.7	8.4
Less than Business	11.4	16.4
Cannot Compare	25.3	48.0
Don't Know	31.6	22.6
Pupil Ideology		
Similar to Colleagues	54.3	71.6
Different	24.7	17.5
Not Sure	19.8	10.9

Secondary school teachers who do not perceive their principal as supportive of creativity, who work in an environment which is culturally different from their own, and who do not share a pupil ideology with their colleagues are candidates for leaving. These factors, coupled with what research identifies as one of the greatest predictors of impending career change, the feeling that the business world offers greater intellectual stimulation, are a cause for concern.

Table 3 reports responses regarding consideration of leaving.

Table 3: Consideration of Leaving

Indicator	Minority	Nonminority
Consideration		
Never	42.0	19.7
Occasionally	28.4	48.0
Seriously	14.8	17.8
Left and Returned	14.8	14.5

Teachers who consider leaving, either occasionally or seriously, particularly when they are associated with half or more of the identified indicators, are prime candidates for leaving the profession. Early indicators of discontent, such as the consideration of leaving, must be recognized, analyzed, and addressed openly and with genuine concern by administrators so that a quality teaching force that reflects cultural diversity may be retained and increased.

Bibliography

Bobbitt, S. (1991). Characteristics of stayers, movers, and leavers: Results from the teacher follow-up survey. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Frase, L. and Sorenson, L. (1992, Jan.) Teacher motivation and satisfaction, NASSP Bulletin, 37-43.

Greabel, L. and Olsen, J. (1986). Role dissatisfaction and career contingencies among female elementary teachers. Journal of the Student Personnel Association for Teacher Education, 18, 112-118.

Grismer, D. W. and Kirby, S. N. (1991). Patterns of attrition among Indiana teachers. (Rand Publication No. RAND-R-4076-LE). Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, CA.

Hafner, A. and Owings, J. (1991). Careers in teaching: Following members of the high school class of 1972 in and out of teaching. Analysis report. (Report No. NCES-91-470) Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Hammer, C. H. and Rohr, C. L. (1992). Teacher attrition and migration: Issue Brief. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Haselkorn, D. (1994). Shaping the profession that shapes America's future. NCATE Quality Teaching, 4(1), 1-2, 10, 12.

Karge, B. D. (1993). Beginning teachers: In danger of attrition. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Marlow, L. and Hierlmeier, R. (1991). Teacher attrition and retention. Florida Journal of Teacher Education, VI, 62-67.

Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. (June 1985). Former teachers in America. NY: Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

Natale, J. A. (1993, July). Why teachers leave. The Executive Educator, 14-18.

Schlechty, P. C. and Vance, V. S. (1981). Do academically able teachers leave education? The North Carolina case. Phi Delta Kappan, 63(1), 106-112.

APPENDIX

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS by ETHNICITY

		PERCENT OF RESPONSES		
		TOTAL	MINORITY	NONMINORITY
GENDER:	MALE	28	4	24
	FEMALE	72	9	63
MARITAL STATUS:	MARRIED	72	8	64
	SINGLE (DIVORCED, WIDOWED SEPARATED, NEVER MARRIED)	28	5	23
CURRENT TEACHING LEVEL:	EARLY CHILDHOOD (K)	4	1	3
	ELEMENTARY (1-4)	14	2	12
	MIDDLE SCHOOL (5-8)	21	3	18
	SECONDARY (9-12)	60	7	53
YEARS EXPERIENCE:	0-4	17	3	14
	5-10	21	3	18
	11-15	19	3	16
	16-20	17	3	14
	OVER 20	26	3	23
MOONLIGHTING:	YES	28	4	24
	NO	72	9	63
PROFESSIONAL PRESTIGE:	BETTER	5	1	4
	WORSE	54	8	46
	EXPECTED	41	4	37
PUPIL IDEOLOGY of COLLEAGUES:	SIMILAR TO COLLEAGUES	89	7	82
	DIFFERENT	19	4	15
	NOT SURE	12	3	9
FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE:	GOOD	63	9	54
	SURPRISING	30	4	26
	DISAPPOINTING	7	1	6
SUPPORT from FRIENDS: (SHOULD YOU LEAVE)	YES	11	1	10
	NO	49	7	42
	NO OPINION	27	3	24
	N/A	12	3	9
SUPPORT-PRINCIPAL:	CREATIVITY/NEW IDEAS	36	6	30
	CONFORMITY/ESTAB. IDEAS	9	2	7
	NEUTRAL	9	1	8
	COMBINATION	39	3	36
	DON'T KNOW	7	2	5
STUDENT CULTURAL COMPOSITION:	SAME	72	8	64
	DIFFERENT	10	4	6
	MIXED	18	1	17
FACULTY ETHNICITY:	SAME	84	7	77
	DIFFERENT	8	5	3
	MIXED	8	2	6
INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION:	MORE	6	2	4
	EQUAL	9	2	7
	LESS	16	2	14
	CANNOT COMPARE	45	3	42
	DON'T KNOW	24	4	20
CONSIDERATION OF LEAVING:	NEVER	23	6	17
	OCCASIONALLY	45	4	41
	SERIOUSLY	18	2	16
	LEFT & RETURNED	14	2	12
FINANCIAL SUPPORT:	SELF	25	3	22
	PARENTS	42	2	40
	SCHOLARSHIPS/GRANTS	22	6	16
	LOANS	11	3	8
WORK ETHIC:	WHITE COLLAR	39	1	38
	BLUE COLLAR	47	9	38
	COMBINATION	13	2	11